

# TELEGRAM

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AID-7

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A-DCM  
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4948

ACTION:

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY

6049/50/31 JULY 6, 1973

KABUL

AIDAC

E.O. 11652: N/A

FOR STAMBERG ASIA/NE FROM BOEHME

SUBJ:

Peppies in Helmand Valley

REF:

A. Memo to the Administrator from J. A. Brown

B. Memo to J. A. Brown from Inspectors Kraft and Marvin

C. Kabul 4694

D. Stenberg to Boehme letter, June 28

1. We are pleased with IG advocacy of early attention to the

urgent need to eradicate cultivation of opium peopies in the U.S. -

sponsored Helmand Valley project area. Mission has itself been

advocating positive Washington inter-agency support and action to

counter growing narcotics problem in Afghanistan since beginning

of year--as you well aware and as voluminous cable traffic attests.

The poppy problem in Afghanistan is not a Helmand Valley problem

nor is it a problem to be approached--with panic mentality--in terms

of the Helmand Valley project (where poppy cultivation problem

generally and increase this year appears to be among most minimal

Draft: ABoehme(A)D JWilson/AGR Approver: (A)D:ABoehme

Clear: DP:AReich (Substance)

RDA:LMitchell (draft)

(A)DCM:DCohn

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in Afghanistan). The poppy problem is country wide. Its serious, ~~XXXXXX~~ most serious manifestations, moreover, are outside the project area being supported by USAID. While planting to the poppy is estimated at 10-15% of total cultivation in some locations ~~outside the U.S.~~ - assisted project area, plots within the project area show zero to 1-2 % cultivated in poppies. A clear indication that U.S. financially- <sup>helped</sup> supported improvements have ~~delighted~~ Helmand Valley Project farmers ~~XXXXXX~~ to earn a livable income without resort to illegal crops. "Irrigation, drainage, land levelling, use of fertilizers and improved seeds, and teaching of better farming practices" has given the farmers of the U.S.- supported area more ability to resist the extraordinary economic incentives of poppy cultivation. USG inputs are, of course, neutral ~~inputs~~ inputs--at worst they improve the farmers' capacity at whatever he undertakes but at best they give farmers viable alternatives to ~~glorified~~ <sup>normal</sup> operations.

2. The observation of extensive cultivation of illicit opium poppies on project lands in the Helmand Valley is erroneous. The Helmand Valley is extensive; the project area limited. <sup>poppy cultivation</sup> ~~XXXXXX~~ on project lands is ~~extensive~~ <sup>relatively</sup> extremely limited.

3. Large U.S. financial outlays at the expense of the U.S. taxpayers,

*not a  
copy*

*The Farmers  
don't think  
like that -  
they don't try  
to resist  
growing poppy  
because  
they think it is  
evil.*

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to suppress opium production in such countries as Turkey, Thailand and Mexico suggest a simple economic explanation for what may be extraordinarily heightened rewards to the illicit cultivator of opium poppies in remote and underdeveloped Afghanistan where the fragility of life is great—survival itself a dangerous game, and where rural economic desperation following two drought years may have provided considerable special incentives incentive to high value poppy cultivation this year.

4. At the time of Messrs. Kraft and Marvin's inspection, opium poppies were in full bloom in one, repeat one, field they <sup>photographed one field</sup> observed in the <sup>photography</sup> project area. The <sup>observation</sup> could not have been duplicated often in other parts of the project area. AID technicians, along with a Peace Corps Volunteer, were indeed working directly with <sup>the</sup> an Afghan farmer, teaching land levelling and other improved agricultural techniques. <sup>the farmer is</sup> a leader—one of the most progressive farmers in the project area. The fact that he was cultivating a small plot of poppies at the time would now rule out his receiving any U. S. -financed advice. (USAID Director, in May, banned U. S. support to individual farmers cultivating poppies in the project area.) While our people expressed disapproval over his poppy cultivation, they were aware that negotiations underway leading to BGA contravention of poppy

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cultivation--nationwide (support for which is under consideration in Kabul, Geneva, Washington and other capitals) would likely rule out his cultivation of poppies in the future. Moreover they were aware that responding to an eagerness for help in acquiring new, modern techniques would enhance his ability to prosper without resort to illegal means.

5. The northern part of the Helmand Valley, from Shikar Girsah to the vicinity of the U.S.-financed Kajahai Dam is not a part of the Helmand-Arghandab Project area receiving U.S. assistance. It has benefitted, of course, from proximity, but it is not a named receiver of U.S. aid.

6. AID has never ignored the fact that U.S. financed improvements may be used by some farmers in inappropriate ways. AID assistance decisions have been based on the assumption that people who can live a reasonable life for themselves and their children within legal means will choose such means over the illegal.

7. Pappy cultivation in the Helmand Valley as all over Afghanistan is more extensive this year than it was last year. Exogenous forces ought, we suspect, be looked to for the explanation.

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6. The Mission has, in as the IG reports, been concerned with poppy cultivation in Afghanistan for a number of years. The Mission is, as the report indicates, anxious to support a comprehensive, long-term plan to eliminate poppy cultivation throughout all of Afghanistan, such as the UN is now suggesting. A piecemeal effort by the U.S. in so minimally affected an area as that encompassed by our project—where a withdrawal of U.S. advice will hurt the majority of innocents in order to punish a few guilty—ill suits the U.S. image and character. It would be particularly inappropriate at a point in time where the Palace and the Prime Ministry have expressed determination to take definitive steps, country-wide, with help from the international community, to eliminate the cultivation of the poppy in Afghanistan.
9. The UN report has appropriately proposed that emphasis be placed on Badakshan and Nangrahar Provinces—these are the parts of the country where poppies are grown most profusely. Efforts to curb poppy production must, of course, also include the Helmand Valley; we identified this need in our March evaluation of the UN report.
10. We fully support the IG view that total suppression of illicit opium poppy cultivation should be undertaken at the earliest practicable

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date. AID has already taken on a "unilateral" basis (with BSA support), at some risk of "getting ahead" of the UN, the first requisite steps--i.e., an aerial survey (prior to conclusion of this flowering poppy season) of much of the Helmand Valley area. Photography is completed and analysis is now underway.

11. Responding to American and growing worldwide concern over narcotics, Mission has been arguing U.S. support for multi-donor efforts to provide the help Afghanistan needs to accomplish effective enforcement of the Afghan law prohibiting opium production.

12. Poppies are being grown in the open in Afghanistan but not finding and planning (lacking the ability to stop their cultivation) while trying to mobilize a meaningful effort at enforcement aimed at elimination is not synonymous with a toleration.

12. 13. The Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA) does not, lacking a viable, concerted national effort, possess a meaningful ability to enforce a ban on poppy growing. Control over distribution of irrigation waters, fertilizer, improved seed, technical assistance, etc. is not so individualized or divisible in this primitive, interdependent environment as to be susceptible to directed and selective application.

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14. AID recognizes a capacity, despite its new collaborative and non-directive style, to influence HAVA authorities (and more importantly the central government) who are dependent upon and deeply (politically as well as economically) interested in future flow of U.S. funds to support desperately needed development. Mission has made clear to HGA that continuation of assistance is critically dependent upon eradication of poppy production not symbolically in one small area--but throughout the country. They have asked for the help needed to do this. We are urging a full measure of U.S. commitment to this important end.

15. Re NS recommendations: (1) Mission concurs but reiterates a concern for elimination of poppy production countrywide rather than a simple, almost symbolic concern over the relatively small production from HAVA; (2) Mission concurs, such action has already been taken; (3) Mission concurs in need to include Helmand Valley in UN-led program but believes, in broader U.S. and worldwide interest, that "top priority" should be focused on major production areas of Afghanistan since our most serious concern is quickest possible limitation of world narcotics supply.

16. Wrap-up and additional background: A. The Mission has and is taking steps directed against opium production in the

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**Helmand Valley. If new project for Valley is programmed--**  
**beginning in July 1974--steps by RGA to eliminate poppy production**  
**in area to be precondition to new project activities. USAID, some**  
**months back, issued instructions precluding technical assistance**  
**from U.S. advisors to poppy growers. Plan ~~to~~ <sup>request</sup> borrowers, under**  
**proposed small farmer credit program, to sign in loan instrument, a**  
**covenant requiring that inputs will not be utilized in growing poppies**  
**or other "illegal crops". USG aiding and urging UN and RGA to**  
**reach agreement on proposed national poppy eradication program.**  
**~~USG will continue to monitor situation and report to Congress.~~**

**B. USAID staff members prepared report on poppy production (Mt Popple**  
**in Afghanistan, Owens and Chilton, published June 1973) based on inter-**  
**views with farmers in all known poppy producing areas in the country**  
**except Badkshan, where not permitted entry. At that time opium**  
**production in Helmand Valley appeared to be decreasing because of**  
**1) low price for gum in bazaar; 2) enforcement efforts of Government**  
**of Iran; and 3) farmers considered opium an unpleasant crop to raise.**

**C. This year, however, evidence began to mount indicating that**  
**something (which we are unable to firmly establish) had happened**

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to trigger an increase in acreage of opium poppy. The number of poppy fields country-wide appeared to have increased several fold. May 4 overflight of Helmand-Arghandab area (reported Kabul 4004) also included among passengers, Mr. Abdul Ghafar, Deputy MinAg and Irrigation, Mr. Ali Ahmad Khurram, Deputy MinPlanning and Mr. Y. S. Samir, Liaison officer in the MinPlan for the Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority. Plane flew from Kajaki Reservoir down Sangha Valley, over Marja and Nad-i-Ali project areas and then over Shamsian at an altitude of about 800 feet above ground level. Poppy fields plainly were visible and rather easily identified by all air passengers at this height; crude estimate (basis overflight and ground reconnaissance) indicated that up to 10-15 percent of land was in poppy in some parts of the Sangha Valley (north of an outside of) Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority project area) while in U.S.-assisted NAVA project area, <sup>poppy</sup> ~~poppy~~ production varied from nothing to perhaps a high of 1% to 2%. Previous year estimates were only one tenth of this year's.

B. Mission over past many months has been aware of growing problem of opium production in Afghanistan and has discussed its seriousness at many Afghan levels, from the King and the PM down through

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HAVA leadership, to local agricultural extension agents and opium producing farmers.

E. It is an unfortunate fact that much modern agricultural technology may be just as effective when applied to opium poppy as when applied to wheat or corn for which originally developed. It probably is true that if poppy is planted in field where modern techniques were used to grow wheat in previous year, yield of opium will be somewhat higher because of residual fertilizer, reduced stand of weeds, and slightly improved level of land.

F. As far as we have been able to determine, in these circumstances, the poppy production problem cannot be overcome even by resort to (a) a general withholding knowledge of new technology and (b) withholding actual inputs (in this case fertilizer and water). Realistically, (a) and (b) constitute panicky, desperate and impracticable steps. An effective enforcement program to prevent production is necessary and difficult but will work only to extent farmer can make living from other crops. Americans in Valley can influence a number of decisions affecting development activities but they cannot shut off supplies from bazaar (seed and fertilizer) and they cannot shut off water. Even BGA would have difficulty denying water either because traditional

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irrigation structures are beyond practical RGA control or because closing off one guilty farmer may shut off the water from dozens of his innocent neighbors. It is even impossible for U.S. to completely close off supply of new technology to offending farmers since they can learn from their neighbors or by seeing new ways of doing things from bus window.

G. USG does not "permit" anything in sovereign Afghanistan. We either assist or refrain from assisting. USAID Director has issued orders that no one in Mission will knowingly work with any farmer cultivating opium poppies. We also expect proposed small farmer credit program to contain provision that credit will not be given to farmers who expect to produce opium and that fertilizer purchased on credit is not to be used for opium production.

H. Indictment of the Valley authorities and AID by the inspectors--on (truistic, perverse) grounds that "AID's decisions regarding assistance to farmers of the Helmand Valley have largely ignored fact that U.S. - financed improvements may also help these same farmers raise better opium poppy crops"--ignores fact that current thinking within AID, the UN and other nations and donors is that in the long run, only hope for getting rid of opium, even with a strong enforcement program, is

to reach

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to teach farmers how to feed and clothe family without resorting to poppy production and by making necessary inputs readily available so that this is possible.

I. For over a year, the Mission has been discussing with HGA possible development of new projects in Helmand and in agriculture for whole country. As discussions continue and if negotiations commence on the Helmand Valley, banning of poppy production in project area is expected to be major point. ~~For some parts of country, not~~ <sup>Development</sup> ~~section in Helmand, development~~ of Afghan research capability is essential. Assistance will also be required in order for agricultural extension service to improve information gathering and dissemination capability so that farmers can be taught sufficiently profitable methods of farming to keep them from turning to poppy in desperation.

J. Area where inspectors found highest concentration of poppy (between Girishk and Kajaki) is not in HAVA project although it is in Helmand Valley. (Much of poppy produced elsewhere in the Valley is outside of the project area as water on the fringes is available intermittently but not regularly enough to produce good crops of wheat or other foods.)

K. U.S. assists HAVA but is not involved in civil governing of area.

Although President of HAVA is also Governor of Helmand Province

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Mission staff in no way serve as counterparts to the Governor.

They are counterparts only to President of HAVA and his staff who

are charged with developing project area in an engineering and

agricultural sense. The major effort to make changes in enforce-

ment and local administration must be made in Kabul. The Mission

is using all the leverage under its control to encourage these changes.

L. The Mission still hopes that the UN/FAO proposal <sup>(already accepted by ROA)</sup> will be accepted by the UN agencies and <sup>other donors</sup> ~~the UN agencies~~, and that action on it will start shortly

after the Geneva meetings in July. ~~In the event these proposals are not~~

~~accepted, the Mission will suggest that the bilateral assistance~~

~~program initiated over a year ago be implemented to the extent~~

~~possible. This program contained proposals for civil service and~~

~~improved marketing, training, enforcement, and administration as well~~

~~as the economic and extension projects mentioned earlier.~~

17. FYI: Mission is struck by similarity in dramatic license of

Wefarab and Kraft/Marvin reports which we can only conclude

indulge in overstatement, tantamount to distortion, in effort to gain

attention. End FYI.

18. Message represents overall U. S. Mission/Afghanistan view.

DECON: 7/6/74

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